Paint the Sky With Stars

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Paint the Sky With Stars

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Summary

Hannibal had been dreaming. In his dreams he meets a peculiar boy with a bright smile and eyes just like his Mischa. Though a wall kept them separated, he still found a companion in the strange boy.

Notes

Inspired by this video

Draw With Me http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRkgH7Uu-hA

Just an advice, it's better you read novel or watch movie Hannibal Rising for more understand the timeline in this fic.

See the end of the work for more notes

“Hello?”

…

“Excuse me?”

…

“Hey, mister?!”

Hannibal Lecter was not very pleased to wake and see the sky. An extraordinarily clear blue sky was not the ceiling of the bedroom where he slept, and therefore he was not where he supposed to be. Movement in the corner of his eye caught his attention and he slowly raised his head from the ground.

He stared blankly at the sight that greeted him.

There was an unbelievable tall, large, strange glass wall that looked like spread miles and miles on either side.

“Mister, can you hear me?”

There was the voice again. He turned his head, looking around to find the source of the voice. Raising cautiously to his feet, Hannibal approached the wall and spotted someone standing on the other side of the wall. It was a small child, no older than six, with dark brown curly hair poking out the top of the blanket he wore.

“Ah, you’re awake,” the boy stated. This boy was who Hannibal heard earlier. The voice was muffled by the glass, but Hannibal had a sharp auditory perception that made him could grasp clearly what the boy said. “You slept so long I almost thought you’d never wake up.”

Hannibal tilted his head slightly as he looked around him, scanning his surrounding while keeping his senses trained on the boy. Where was he? He remembered fell asleep in one of many bedrooms in Uncle Robert’s estate, and he woke up in this suspicious, unknown place. How did he get here? He was now in the middle of snowy nowhere just in his sleep attire.

“Are you okay, mister?”

His eyes reflexively narrowed at the question. No, he was not okay. He was just brought back from *hell* by his uncle. He burned with anger over the ones who killed his beloved sister. He pulled his anger back in a second, chastised himself for losing control of his emotion – though it just for a second.

“Um… sorry, I didn’t mean to offend you. Please don’t be angry at me.”

Hannibal blinked his eyes. How did this boy know he was angry? He was very sure to careful enough to not let his emotion showed. There's many questions he wanted to ask the boy, but at the moment he was mute as his vocal cords were damaged and in convalescing. He reached into his pocket, and quite surprised when his fingers tracing something smooth and long. It was a marker. An idea came into his mind. He pulled out the marker in his pocket and began to write on the wall.

I'm not angry with you.

The boy frowned at the words, his eyebrows scrunched in what Hannibal thought a confusion. Hannibal realized what was wrong. He crossed out the words and wrote the same message underneath, but backwards with the letters reversed. He had a difficulty in writing like that as this was the first time he did it, but he managed. If Leonardo da Vinci could do it, then he made sure he could too.

Comprehension dawned on the boy's face, before he nodded with a wide bright smile spread on his lips. The smile reminded Hannibal of his Mischa. Unconsciously, a small smile tugged on Hannibal's lips. The smile faded as quickly, and he started writing again.

Do you know where this is?

Hannibal observed the boy in scrutiny. The boy was clothed in ratty pajamas, a thick blanket with a small patch wrapped around him, sitting and curled up like he was trying to shield himself against the cold. Despite his appearance, Hannibal knew the boy was not ordinary for the way he spoke was not like most six years old.

"I don't know," the boy said softly, his blue eyes locked at Hannibal's maroon ones. "I mean… I dream about this place sometimes. This is the first time I've seen you here."

Dreaming? A silence hum vibrated in Hannibal's throat. That would explain a lot, but he was lucid. He dug a nail into his palm. Ouch. Yes, lucid. So, he could not be dreaming.

Do you think I am dreaming too? Hannibal wrote.

The boy crossed his legs as he squinted and frowned, examining the man who had appeared in his little sanctuary. "Maybe. Probably. I also am not feel like in normal dream when I'm here, if you're wondering why you feel like you're awake."

Hannibal was still, pondering if this was true, that he was in some dream. He pressed his hand to the cold glass wall as his other hand started to write again.

Well, don't force yourself thinking about that. If this is just a dream, we can look for the answer after we wake up. Hannibal saw the boy had moved closer and openly studying him with curiosity written all over his face. ***My name is Hannibal. What's your name?***

A shy smile had shown on the boy's face. "I'm William."

Nice to meet you, William. Hannibal wrote, before leaning against the glass wall and saw the boy was doing the same, directly across him. Hannibal felt it was almost like they were

leaning against each other, and he found it at least a little bit comforting.

'This is probably a coping mechanism of some sort,' Hannibal thought as he writing his answers to the boy's various questions. Since he lost his family in the war, he was always alone. Even when he was in his family castle, which had been converted into an orphanage, he always alone. Maybe he was lonely, and his brain unconsciously created someone to accompany him in his dream, like how it created his memory palace.

"…I think I'm dreaming you up," the boy… no, *William* said dazedly, as awareness back to Hannibal. "I've never seen anyone with eyes like yours before. Red is definitely not common for eyes."

It's maroon, not red. Hannibal wrote.

"What's the difference? They are both red."

It's different, maroon is dark brownish-red. It's a mixed color of red.

William patted his hair self-consciously. "Like I said, they are both red," he grumbled, saw Hannibal's eyes narrowed. "Why are you so adamant? You're like the fanatic painter I had once seen in the park."

Hannibal raised his eyebrow and wrote amusedly. ***To answer your question, I like to admire the paintings.***

"Oh, great. Another one."

'Rude,' Hannibal thought, frowned at the boy's demeanor.

Maybe William saw his disapproved look, as the boy quickly spoke. "I'm sorry. It's just… there's a man in the neighbor who always talking about paintings every time we met. I like to admiring the paintings too, but I don't want it in the *whole* of our conversation."

He stared at the boy in amused. ***It's okay. I'm sorry too for make you uneasy.***

William smiled back at his companion. "Hey, do you think you can-"

Hannibal cocked his head, confused as William stopped talking. ***What's wrong?*** he wrote.

"I'm waking up," William said mournfully, laying down on the snowy floor.

Puzzled, Hannibal laid down too. He saw the boy wriggled closer to the glass wall and pressed a hand on it. Hannibal moved his hand to trace the glass where William's hand was, suddenly hoping that he could hold that little hand.

“When you wake up in real life, you fall asleep here,” William explained, eyes dropping. “Um… thanks, Hannibal, for being here. It was nice to talk with you.”

It’s nice to talk with you too. Hannibal wrote. He got a quick flash of a smile from William, before the boy’s eyes shut and his grip on the wall slackened.

“I hope I see you again sometime,” William murmured. And as Hannibal blinked, the boy was gone.

Hannibal was alone in this strange place. There was no sign that William had been here, his print in the snow a while back had disappeared.

Hm, interesting.

Hannibal stretched out his legs and leant back on his hand, looking up at the sky. He was already missed the company William provided, a bit. He laid down after a short while, curling up on his side. Well, he hoped he would see the boy again. It’s nice to have someone to talk to…

He opened his eyes slowly, and greeted by familiar white ceiling. He sat up, looking around him as he scratched his head. This was definitely the bedroom where he slept last night. His covers were warm, his bed comfortable, the ceiling was white completely different from that of the endless, low blue sky he had seen in his dream.

After a few minutes of indecision, something he rarely felt, Hannibal got out of the bed and washed his face at the bowl and pitcher on his nightstand, readying himself for another day at his uncle’s estate.

It took Hannibal seven days to convince himself that his dream had been just… a dream.

He was no fool. He was a lonely, hurt kid. Moreover, after he lost his Mischa. And though he had his Uncle Robert and Lady Murasaki near him, he was still lonely. He probably desired a friend, and because he couldn’t have that in the real world, his mind created a friend he wished.

It was foolish to think that William was real. William was just, what they said, his imaginary friend. He’s not real. Was. Not. Real.

And life continued as usual. Study again. Met the psychiatrist, Dr. Rufin. And…

Oh, right, he promised to accompany his aunt to the market around the fountain and statue of Marshal Forch. Well, he hoped today went very well without any incident.

But, it was not. The day ended very badly, which was led him to experience an interesting week. Kill and be killed.

It was a full five months before he dreamt of William again.

He saw William at a short distance away, scribbled something on the glass wall. The boy did not notice him. Hannibal walked over the wall where William was, watching the snow falling gently. Though it was snowing, he wasn't felt cold – he also felt like it before. And the glass was also not frosting, just kept clear and transparence.

"Hello, William," he called finally, watching the boy jumped and whirled around with eyes widened.

"…Hannibal!" William gasped in disbelief, abandoning his doodles and rushing over. "Y-You're back?!"

"I am," Hannibal marveled, not believing it either.

William pressed his palms to the glass wall. "I… I thought…" he stuttered. "I just… wow, you're back. I didn't think I'd see you again!"

"I convinced myself we hadn't," Hannibal confessed, almost ashamed.

"I hoped we had," William said softly, before a wide grin adorned his face. "And… and you can talk! You never talk when we first met, so I thought you were mute!" He clamped his mouth with his hands. "I… I'm sorry…"

Hannibal found himself smiling at the boy. "It's okay, William. I was mute at that time, because my vocal cords damaged." He saw a concern look on William's face. "Don't worry, it's healed. That's why I can talk now."

There was a long silence, weird and unnatural. William started to continue his scribbles, while Hannibal looked out at the horizon, blurring into whiteness.

Hannibal pulled out his marker and began to write backward. ***What are you drawing?***

William glanced at him in confusion. Hannibal smiled, before his hand writing something again.

I know you have trouble grasped what I was saying because of the glass. You don't need to hide it. Hannibal saw William smiled sheepishly, and felt amused. When William moved his marker to write something, Hannibal quickly added. ***Talk normally. I can hear you.***

"But, if it's hard for me to grasp what you're saying, then you too, right?"

I have a sharp auditory perception.

William frowned in confusion. "What's that mean?"

It's mean I can hear you clearly despite the glass. *'Well, not that clearly,'* Hannibal added inwardly.

"Hmm…" William grunted, pouting at how he had trouble hearing through the glass while Hannibal had not. But his hand decided back to doodle again.

So, what are you drawing?

"A sky."

Hannibal tilted his head. ***A sky? It's not like a sky for me.***

"It's because I draw the night sky," William said, drawing a picture of a cloud. "See, this is the cloud and the dots around it are the stars," he pointed.

And this is? Hannibal pointed the draw beside the so called star.

"It's moon. Can't you tell?"

Hannibal smiled amusedly as he saw the boy huffed. ***No, I can't. It looks like a jagged rock for me.***

William puffed his cheeks. "Well, how about you draw the night sky too, oh The Artist One." he grumbled.

Hannibal chuckled softly. ***Is that a challenge?***

"You bet."

"How old are you?" William asked as he drew something like river with dots in the middle.

Hannibal glanced away from his drawing, and moved to write on another area of the wall. ***I'm fifteen year old. Why?***

"Just curious, that's all."

Hannibal cocked an eyebrow. ***Then, you don't mind if I ask about yourself in my curiosity?***

William shrugged. "Go ahead."

Are you real?

A long silence emitted between the two. Hannibal did not need to look at William to read the incredulity coming off of him.

"What kind of question is that? Of course I'm real."

Well, there's a possibility you're just an illusion that created by my mind in my loneliness.

"Silly. I'll tell you, I'm real. I woke up in my bedroom, in my house, and had a talk with Dad in breakfast. If I'm not real, then how my dad could speak with me?"

I apologize. I didn't mean to offend you.

"Non taken. Hey, you said that you think I'm a being that created by your mind because of your loneliness," William rubbed out the wrong line in his drawing. "Are you lonely out there?"

Hannibal paused. ***Not really.*** He wrote after a while. ***I have Lady Murasaki keeping me company.***

"Lady Murasaki?"

My late uncle's wife.

William blinked. "Your uncle is dead?"

Please say "has passed away". "Is dead" sounds rude. Hannibal reprimanded.

William clamped his little hand on his mouth. "Oops. Your uncle *has passed away*?"

Yes, about five months ago.

"Oh, I'm sorry."

Don't be. It's not your fault.

"But still… I'm sorry for your loss," William said softly.

Hannibal was giving the boy a soft look. ***Is your drawing finished?*** He quickly changed the topic.

William blinked his eyes, before nodded. "Yeah."

Hannibal got up and moved to where William had been drawing. It still didn't look anything like the night sky the boy intended, but Hannibal still giving the boy a compliment with, of course, pointers here and there. He felt satisfied when he saw the boy dutifully listening him.

And when it came the time to look at Hannibal's drawing, William gasped in amazement as he stared agape at it.

"Woah…" William exclaimed with his mouth fell open. "This is amazing!!"

The drawing was breathtaking. The composition of the lines and the contours were exactly rendered, and the shade made the picture looked real.

Well, I have to say that this drawing is not quite finished. Hannibal wrote sheepishly. ***If only I have other colors beside black, this picture could be more than this.***

“This alone is already very good!” William said brightly. “Damn, I will always remember this forever!!”

Hannibal knocked the glass wall with his knuckle as he giving him a look. ***Language, William.*** He wrote sharply.

“But, really, *Hannibal*,” William continued, not caring the glare from his company. “This drawing is more than good. It’s fucking excellent! I want to take it home and framed it!”

Thank you. And now, could you stop swearing? You make my ears bleed.

A gasp sounded loud from William. “You tell a joke?!” he asked with a mocked surprise. “Oh my God, you’re really joking! Is the world going to end?”

Hannibal sighed, before shaking his head.

Hannibal was careful. Sort of. It was tempting to tell Lady Murasaki about William, but he refrained. There were more important things to talk about. Something more important to do at this time. He was quiet, doing his best to be *careful.* Somewhere between putting William and the strange dream behind him, Hannibal’s attitude took an inexplicable shift from amiable neutrality to a cold, blank wall.

He was now with Inspector Popil to visit the paintings in custody, the paintings that had looted from Lecter Castle during the war. He treads with quiet care on each step, inside cringing at a loud squeak from the opened door as he followed the inspector down the hall.

Popil let Hannibal walking into the vault first, before he closed the door and left the teenager alone in the room with a guard as he had something else to attend to. Hannibal traced the paintings with his eyes. It’s maddening, to sit in the dumb silence of the vault under the eye of the guard, in earshot of the man’s adenoidal breathing.

Hannibal looked at the painting he recalled he took from his mother’s hands and knew the past was not the past at all, the beast that panted its hot stench on his skins was still breathing now. He turned the “Bridge of Sighs” to the wall and stared back of the painting for minutes.

His dream of Mischa was back to haunt him. He let out a tight sigh, as he tracing the back of the painting with his eyes. There was supposed a handprint on there, Mischa’s handprint, but it was erased and only a blank square now where he projected his dreams.

And he was seething.

He was growing and changing, or perhaps emerging as what he has ever been. Or, it supposed to be like that, but the image of William now mixed with Mischa’s and he was unsure now what would become of him.

Three years had passed, and Hannibal never once dreamt of William in those years. He was too busy with many things to thought about it before, but now he was missed the boy so much. It's weird, because he only saw the boy twice. He tried to sketch the boy's face. The charcoal in his hand moved steadily, making strokes of lines and shade. As he was getting lost in his drawing, unwittingly he went to the center of his own mind and into the foyer of his memory palace.

He did not aware that the picture he drew was changed. The face he drew did not resemble the object he was intended to. It was not William's face. It was a face from the sheds where he and Mischa were years back. It was the face of the Blue-Eyes, Vladis Grutas.

Standing with Mischa in the barn beside the lodge, holding her close, Mischa coughing. Bowl-Man feels the flesh of their arms and speaks, but no sound comes out of his mouth, only his vile breath visible in the freezing air. Mischa buries her face against Hannibal's chest to get away from Bowl-Man's breath. Blue-Eyes is saying something, and now they are singing, cozening. Seeing the axe and bowl. Flying at Blue-Eyes, taste of blood and beard stubble, they are taking Mischa away. They have the axe and the bowl. Breaking free and running after them, feet lifting tooo slooooow to the door, Blue-Eyed One and Bowl-Man holding Mischa by her wrists above the ground, she twisting her head to look back desperately at him across the bloody snow and calling…

"Annibal!!"

Hannibal came awake, choking, holding onto the dream, clamping his eyes tight shut and tried to force himself past the point he awoke. He bit inside his mouth and made himself go over the dream.

"…annibal, wake up!!"

His body tensed when he heard the yelling. The voice was too familiar for him to ignore it. He slowly sat up, and stunned by the field of flowers spread wide around him.

"Hannibal, can you hear me?!"

He turned, seeing a brunette boy pressed up on the glass wall. The boy banged the wall with his fist, panic and worry had clearly written on his face. Hannibal still could recognize who the boy was though, he noticed, his appearance had changed, a bit older.

It was William.

"Oh, you're awake," the boy stated, and stopped on pounding the wall. He sighed as he slid down to the grassy floor. "Goddamn it, you've made me soooo worried."

"Language, William." Hannibal said with a frown.

William chuckled dryly. “You have been frightened me by your screaming and clawing, and the first thing you do after you open your eyes is reprimand me for my language?” he shook his head in disbelief. “Oh, *fuck you*, Hannibal.”

“William.”

“Yeah, yeah. I know, I know.” William waved his hand, his shoulders slumped. “But please, let me cursing for now. You gave me a quite scare, you know? If only I could break this wall… damn it!”

Hannibal gave him a disapproving look, but did not say anything. He sat, leaning onto the wall instead, his fingers combing back the fringe of his bangs. He could feel his body still trembled with dread, could hear Mischa screaming as *they* dragged her away from him.

He closed his eyes tightly, walking into his memory palace and tried to cross the grounds to the dark sheds. He had so many questions about those men that unanswered. What did the men call each other? What were their names? If he wanted to know what they called each other, he had to finish the dream. He could endure to see his mother’s clothes on fire, he could see the looters moving below him and Mischa in the haunting lodge, but he could not remember anything after that, there was a hole in his memory as he could only recall much later, he was riding on a tank, found by the soldiers with the chain locked around his neck.

A banging sound knocked him back to awareness. He glanced to the side and met a worried look on William’s face.

“You’re awake now?” the boy asked, more calmly than before.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered, wincing at how hoarse his voice was. “Thank you.”

William blinked. “For what?”

Hannibal looked at William’s eyes for awhile. They were blue, just like Vladis Grutas’. But not like Grutas’ eyes, William’s were stunning, unusual – not scary or unsettling. Beautiful and innocent. “For brought me back here,” he said finally.

“I didn’t do anything,” William frowned.

“But still… thank you.” And not just for brought Hannibal back here, for did not ask anything about the nightmare.

A grin spread out on William’s face. “Ah, well… you’re welcome, then!”

Hannibal let out a low chuckle. “What have you been up to? You look more excited than usual.”

William scratched behind his head as he smiled shyly. “Erm… just happy to see you again,” he shrugged. “It’s been a while. Three years is a long time.”

“It has,” Hannibal agreed, before he frowned. “Do you come here more often than I do?”

“Huh?” William startled, his fingers playing with a flower stem beside him. “Ah… no, not since I met you first time. Now I just come here every time you do.”

“That’s good.” Hannibal sometimes worried that William spent time in this strange place by himself.

The silence between the two was uncomfortable. The wind was blowing as they watching the flower petals flutter down.

“Soooo… tell me what have you been doing these three years. You look sharp, by the way.” William said after a while. And as they were chatting, Hannibal found himself forgetting his nightmare.

They trek through the flower fields. Hannibal was unused with this comfortable feeling – this *peaceful* feeling. It was like water that washed away his fear. He did not know the reason this changed background, as the last two visits there was snow *everywhere*. This time was, however, a field of flowers, and it was bright, warm and there was a pleasant breeze.

Maybe this was a consolation for him.

“Hey, I notice that your accent sounds so foreigner,” William said, tossing a few flowers he found on their way back into the air. “Seems you’re not an American.”

‘American?’ Hannibal stuck his hands into the pocket of the lab coat he had been wore before he fell asleep in the real world, watching his feet brushing the flowers as he walking. He was glad that William now had no difficulty to hear what he said despite the glass, he did not feel like to write anything at this time. “No, I’m not. I’m a Lithuanian.”

“Lithuania? I’ve never heard of it.”

“It’s a country in Northern Europe.”

“So, you live in this… Lithuania?”

Hannibal was silent for a moment. “No, I’m not.”

William hummed. “I guess you don’t live in my town. I’d know you if you did. It's a little town after all.”

“No, I suppose not. I live in Paris.”

William’s eyes widened. “Paris, as in…” he quickly pulled out his marker and drew something like a familiar famous tower on the glass wall. “Paris?” he asked, pointing at his doodle.

Hannibal stared at the boy in amused. “Yes, that Paris.”

William stared at his company in amazement. “Wow. I’ve heard stories about Paris.”

“Good stories, I hope?”

“Yeah, like how beautiful is there. And the arts and architectures. And the people.”

“It’s a great city, indeed.”

“And they make it sounds like France is much more interesting than Louisiana.”

‘Louisiana’ rang only the faintest of bells. He’d better look at the map once he woke up, he noted. ‘American’ and ‘Louisiana’, they were his only clues to know more about this boy.

Soon William stopped walking. “Aw~!” he whined, as he flopped backwards to sit down, suddenly too tired to stay upright. “My Dad is waking me up.”

Hannibal chuckled softly. He brought his hand to his mouth to cover his yawn. “I think I’m going to wake up too.”

“Hey, Hannibal.” William called, laying down on the flowers.

“Hm?”

William locked his eyes at Hannibal’s, staring deeply behind his sleepy eyelids with a serious intensity that looked somehow wrong on his young features, and Hannibal suddenly felt those eyes could see through his body and soul. “Please, don’t do anything harsh, okay?”

Hannibal blinked, frowned as the boy vanished from his view. *Don’t do anything harsh,* William had said. ‘*What’s that supposed to mean?’* Hannibal wondered, feeling his eyelids were getting heavy, before he swayed into slumber and walking toward the wakefulness of the real world.

Three weeks later found Hannibal lay on the low bed in his garret room. The candles flickered on the faces he had drawn from his dreams, the nightmare ones. He had a needle in his arm, attached to a hypodermic filled with the cocktail of hypnotics used in the interrogation of Louis Ferrat. He pushed the plunger of the needle a quarter of an inch and felt the drug burn in his vein. He rubbed his arm to move it along.

He actually did not want to resort this, but he needed their names. The names of the faces who had been haunting him in his nightmares. He started the turntable of the windup phonograph on the table beside the bed, and lowered the thick needle arm onto the record of children’s songs. The record was scratchy, the sound tinny and thin, but it pierced him.

Hannibal stared steadily by candlelight at the faces sketched from his nightmares, and tried to make their mouths move. Perhaps they would sing at first, and then say their names. He sang himself, to start them singing.

He saw the Blue-Eyed One smiled with a bemused expression that burnt in Hannibal's mind. *And then the smell of wood smoke in the lodge, the tiered smoke in the cold room, the cadaverine breath of the men crowded around him and Mischa on the hearth. They took them out to the barn then. Pieces of children's clothing in the barn, stained and strange to him.He couldn't hear the men talking, couldn't hear what they called each other, but then the distorted voice of Bowl-Man saying, "Take her, she's going to die anyway. He'll stay freeeeeaaassh a little longer." Fighting and biting and coming now the thing he could not stand to see, Mischa held up by the arms, feet clear of the bloody snow, twisting,* ***looking back at him****.*

"ANNIBAL!!"

Hannibal snapped awake in the bed. His hand was rushing to the table, grabbed another hypodermic. He pushed the plunger of the hypodermic all the way down his arm. And then the barn swam back around him.

"ANNIBAL!!"

He heard a scream, ***her*** *scream. Hannibal was running to the door after her and the men who took her away. The barn door slammed on his arm, bones cracking, Blue-Eyes turning back to raise the firewood stick, swinging at his head, there was a sound of the axe from the yard, before the darkness welcoming him.*

And he woke up to the freshness smell of flowers.

"I've already told you to not do anything harsh."

Hannibal's body tensed by that childish voice. William had been behind him. He sat up fully and turned, seeing the boy standing quietly on the other side of the glass wall.

"Did you bring me here?" Hannibal asked calmly.

William snorted. "Nope. Like I can do that. You did that yourself." He drew something on the wall. "I was fishing with my father, you know? I just closed my eyes briefly and when I opened them, I'm here, and you came screaming and scare me with what I *saw*." He shook his head, swaying his curly dark brown hair. "What the hell is wrong with you, using a drug to visit your nightmare?! People usually avoid that!"

Hannibal glared sharply at the boy. "How do you know about that?"

William fell silent for a moment, locking his gaze with Hannibal's maroon ones. "I just know," he finally said, shrugging.

The boy was obviously holding quite many back. Hannibal watched him picking a bunch of flowers, his vision going in and out of focus. He lay back down, drawing William's attention to him. He closed his eyes tightly in hope the sleepiness would come to him.

"What are you doing?" William asked.

"Trying to sleep."

William frowned at the answer. "If you're forcing yourself to sleep in *here*, you're not going to wake up in the real world, you know? You will return to your previous dream. If your dream before was a nightmare, you will back to your nightmare. I had experienced that."

"That's better, then."

William groaned aloud and pounded his fist to the wall, making Hannibal jumped in surprise. "Come on, Hannibal! Don't be a crazy!" William shouted. "Like hell you want to go back to the nightmare that made you screaming like a slaughtered lamb!"

Hannibal sighed. "I'm not screaming like a slaughtered lamb."

"Oh, like I will believe that. I have witnessed you screaming twice, remember?"

Hannibal felt unnerved. "No, I don't. And I don't remember ever screamed in front of you. You just made them up."

"You were screaming. If I could bring a recorder here, I will record you the next time you scream to prove it to you."

Hannibal just raised his eyebrow. "But, you can't, and it's enough."

Past it. Past the thing he could not look at, the thing he could not hear and live. Waking in the lodge with blood dried on the side of his head and pain shooting from his upper arm, chained to the upstairs banister and the rug pulled over him. Thunder– no, those were artillery bursts in the trees, the men huddled in front of the fireplace with the cook's leather pouch, pulling off their dog tags and throwing them into the pouch along with their papers, dumping the papers from their wallets, and pulling on Red Cross armbands. And then the scream and brilliant flash of a phosphorus shell bursting against the hull of the dead tank outside and the lodge is burning, burning. The criminals rushing out into the night, to their half-track truck, and at the door the Cooker stops. Holding the satchel up beside his face to protect it from the heat, he takes a padlock key from his pocket and tosses it up to Hannibal as the next shell came and they never heard the shell scream, just the house heaving, the balcony where Hannibal lay tipping, him sliding against the banister and the staircase coming down on top of the

Cooker. Hannibal hearing his hair crisp in a tongue of flame and then he is outside, the half-track roaring away through the forest, the rug around him smoldering at its edge, shell bursts shaking the ground, and splinters howling past him. Putting out the smoldering blanket with snow, and trudging, trudging, his arm hanging…

Hannibal opened his eyes, panting as his eyelids flickered. The phonograph has slowed and stopped, and the candles gutter low. He shook until it ended, feeling his sweat began to cool on his forehead. He rose from his bed, and walking over the window. The cold breeze brushed against his skin when he opened it. Day is coming. The light is rising between the dawn grey on the roofs of Paris. A confident but feral smile tugged slowly on his lips, as he watching the light is everywhere.

New light is everywhere.

It took only four days for them to meet again.

He was not surprised to find William ignored him, but he was not expecting it either. He knew William was angry with him about the last encounter they had, but he expecting the boy to confront him and yelling so many swear words that even make a sailor blush.

But, a silent William? He never expecting at all.

“You’re still angry,” Hannibal said, as he sat and leaning to the wall.

“…”

“I’m sorry, William, for discard your feeling like that.”

Just scratching sound by the marker, was heard.

“William?” Hannibal called.

“…”

“It’s rude not to answer, William.”

William kept ignored him.

Hannibal was cocking his eyebrow. The boy proved to be very stubborn. Hannibal sighed, thinking of what he should do to get William’s attention.

And a sly idea came across his mind.

“Are you going to answer me, or are you going to keep sulking and pouting like a little brat?”

William whirled around. “I’m not sulking!” he yelled, and clamped his mouth with his hands.

Hannibal smirked at this, feeling smug.

William groaned loudly. “Fuck you, asshole,” he grumbled, pouting.

“If it’s not because of this wall, my dear William, I’m going to wash your mouth with soap.”

William puffed his cheeks, muttering something like “granny” and “smartass”. But then he jolted as if he was realizing something. “My dear?” he asked confusedly.

“Hm?”

“You said ‘my dear William’.”

Hannibal blinked in confusion. “Yes, I am…?” he said slowly. “I’m sorry if you didn’t like…”

“No, no, no! it’s okay, really!” William cut quickly, flushing as he waved his hands. “It’s just… why?” he asked softly.

Hannibal was stiffened by that, speechless. Why? He asked to himself, pondering about how he would answer that one word question. He wanted to say that there was no particular reason, but it did not seem quite right for himself. For a moment he thought about it, and his eyes widened slightly when he got his answer.

He had already considered William as his friend.

Hannibal’s eyes softened, watching the boy fidgeted. “Because you are very dear for me, William. You are my friend,” he finally said.

William’s eyes widened. He made a squeaking noise, plucking at his worse-for-wear pajamas. “I… I don’t… I’m your friend?”

Hannibal nodded. “Yes.”

William flushed and moved away to where the picture he drew was, drawing furiously. Hannibal tilted his head, wondering about the boy’s behavior. He looked up at the sky, it was cloudier than usual. Occasionally, pleasant breeze brushed his skin. He could imagine the birds chirping in the distance.

A yawn was heard. Turning his head, Hannibal watched William covered his mouth with heavy eyelids. William was sleepy, and that means it’s time for him to go. Hannibal frowned as he did not want him to go yet. He missed the company William provided, and he did not know when he would saw the boy again. After all, he could not arrange the time for this strange dream appeared.

“I’m sorry, Hannibal. It’s my time to go back.” William yawned, flopping onto the flower bed.

Hannibal traced the glass with his finger. “It’s okay, my dear William.”

William’s voice was very quiet, Hannibal almost missed it. “Thanks. And you’re my friend too.”

The boy was gone. A genuine smile spread across Hannibal’s lips unconsciously, before it disappeared, bewildered over its appearance. All around him was silent as he laid down and rolled over, smashing more flowers. He watched the sky for a long while, thinking deeply about something. Eventually the sky morphed into his bedroom ceiling and he continued to lay there.

“I did a research about all of this,” Hannibal waved his hand to his surrounding. “And I want to ask you something.”

William rubbed the lines to deepen the shade in his drawing on the glass. “Go ahead.”

“Are you a dreamwalker?”

The boy stopped, before turning his head to the blond in confusion. “What is that?” he asked.

Hannibal frowned. “You don’t know?” He saw William shaking his head. “Dreamwalker is one who works with and within the dream to understand, to create, to journey the dream realm. In short, Dreamwalker is someone who had ability to enter other people’s dreams.”

William wiped his stained hand on his pants. “So, what make you think that I’m this… dreamwalker?”

“You **are** in my dream.”

William raised his eyebrow. “And what make you think **you** are not the dreamwalker instead? You walk around in my dream after all.”

“Because I’m just an ordinary human.” Hannibal deadpanned.

William’s eyes bored to his companion as if saying, ‘Are you kidding me?’. “I’ll have you know, I’m an ordinary human too,” William paused. “Well, not so.”

Now, it’s Hannibal who raised his eyebrow. “*Not so*?”

William shrugged. “It’s a secret~!” he sang cheerily.

Hannibal felt intrigued, he opened his mouth to ask more, but a yawn came out instead. He immediately covered his mouth with his hand, feeling surprised by this.

“Already?” William asked, perplexed.

Hannibal nodded and let out an annoyed sigh.

“But, that’s too soon…” William trailed sadly.

Hannibal was also upset by this, but he could not complain as he was now in a train. Maybe the train will arrive at the station anytime. He gave William a weak smile, sitting right in front of the boy. “Don’t be sad. We will meet again, right?”

William nodded and smiling back. “Then, see you later, Hannibal.”

The smile on Hannibal’s lips was more genuine as he closed his eyes. “See you later, my dear William.”

Hannibal opened his eyes back, blinking sleepily on his seat. The sound of the train echoed in his ears. He turned his head toward the scenery outside, sighing at the thought he had left William alone in that dream. He lowered the dirty window of the train, watching, watching as the train wound through tall second growths of linden and pine on both sides of the tracks and then, as he passed at a distance of less than a mile, he saw the towers of Lecter Castle.

How dare this miscreant sullied this sacred time with his despicable presence.

Hannibal watched with disgust at the man… no, *pig* who sat gagged and bound to a tree. But it was fine, because this pig was one of the ruffians who had killed his sister. Settling himself on the ground, Hannibal examined the contents of the pig’s pack. A map and car keys, an army can opener, a sandwich in an oilskin pouch, an apple, a change of socks, and a wallet. From the wallet he took an ID card and compared it to the dog tags from the lodge.

“*Herr*… Dortlich,” Hannibal hummed lightly, before a cold smile spread on his lips. “Well, Herr Dortlich. On behalf of myself and my late family, I want to thank you for coming today. It means a great deal to us, and to me personally, having you here. I’m glad to have this chance to talk seriously with you about eating my sister.”

Yes, he had remembered now of what happened to Mischa. And he was **livid** because of that.

Hannibal pulled out the gag, and the pig began talking at once. “I am a policeman from the town, the horse was reported stolen.” the pig said. “That’s all I want here, just say you’ll return the horse and we’ll forget it.”

Hannibal glanced at Cesar, the horse he took from Lecter Castle, and wanted to laugh. Stole? Him? This horse was originally his. Hannibal shook his head. “I remember your face. I have seen it many times. And your hand on us with the webs between your fingers, feeling who was fattest. Do you remember that bathtub bubbling on the stove?”

“No. From the war I only remember being cold.”

“Did you plan to eat me today, Herr Dortlich? You have your lunch right here.”Hannibal examined the contents of the sandwich. “So much mayonnaise, Herr Dortlich!”

“They’ll come looking for me very soon,” the pig said.

“You felt our arms.” Hannibal felt the pig’s arm. “You felt our cheeks, Herr Dortlich,” he said, tweaking the pig’s cheek. “I call you ‘Herr’ but you aren’t German, are you, or Lithuanian, or Russian or anything, are you? You are your own citizen, a citizen of Dortlich. Do you know where the others are? Do you keep in touch?”

“All dead, all dead in the war.”

Hannibal smiled at him and untied the bundle of his own handkerchief. It was full of mushrooms. “Morels are one hundred francs a centigram in Paris, and these were growing on a stump!” He got up and went to the horse. The pig writhed in his bonds for the moment when Hannibal’s attention was elsewhere.

There was a coil of rope on Cesar’s broad back. Hannibal attached the free end to the traces of the harness. The other end was tied in a hangman’s noose. Hannibal paid out rope and brought the noose back to the pig. He opened the pig’s sandwich and greased the rope with mayonnaise, and applied a liberal coating of mayonnaise to the pig’s neck.

Flinching away from his hands, the pig said, “One remains alive! In Canada–Grentz–look there for his ID. I would have to testify.”

“To what, Herr Dortlich?”

“To what you said. I didn’t do it, but I will say I saw it.”

Hannibal fixed the noose about the pig’s neck and looked into his face. “Do I seem upset with you?” He returned to the horse.

“That’s the only one, Grentz. He got out on a refugee boat from Bremerhaven. I could give a sworn statement-”

Hannibal turned Cesar’s rump to the pig. “I don’t want you to see this,” he clicked in Cesar’s ear and walked him forward.

The pig turned his neck from side to side in the greasy noose, watching the rope uncoil in the grass. The rope rose out of the grass, some belly in it, and the pig screamed, “Porvik! His name was Porvik! We called him Pot Watcher. Killed in the lodge. You found him.”

Hannibal stopped the horse and walked back to the pig, bent over and looked into his face. The pig said, “Tie him, tie the horse, a bee might sting him.”

“Yes, there are a lot of them in the grass.” Hannibal consulted the dog tags. “So… Milko?”

“I don’t know, I don’t know. I swear.”

“And now we come to Grutas.”

“I don’t know, I don’t. Let me go and I will testify against Grentz. We will find him in Canada.”

Hannibal led the horse forward, dew glistened on the rope, almost level now.

The pig’s strangled scream was heard. “It’s Kolnas! Kolnas deals with him.”

Hannibal patted the horse and came back to bend over the pig. “And where is Kolnas?”

“Fontainebleau, near the Place Fontainebleau in France. He has a cafe. I leave messages. It’s the only way I can contact him.” The pig looked Hannibal in the eye. “I swear to God she was dead. She was dead anyway, I swear it.”

‘How stupid and ignorant are you.’ Staring into the pig’s face, Hannibal clicked to the horse. The rope tightened and the dew flew off it as the little hairs on the rope stood up. A strangled scream from the pig cut off, a wet crunch and a pulsing arterial spray. The pig’s head followed the noose for about six meters and lay looking up at the sky.

Hannibal whistled and the horse stopped, his ears turned backward. He dumped the contents of the pig’s pack on the ground and took his car keys and ID. He made a crude spit from green sticks and patted his pockets for matches. While his fire was burning down to useful coals, Hannibal took the pig’s apple to Cesar. He took all the harness off the horse so he could not get tangled in the brush and walked him down the trail toward the castle. He hugged the horse’s neck and then slapped him on the rump. “Go home. Cesar, go home.”

Cesar knew the way.

He did not need to look at the mirror to know that he was crying.

Hannibal opened his eyes to the clear, unnatural blue sky, feeling warm water cascading down his cheeks. He calmly walked over the glass wall, making a loud crunching on the patch of snow. He could still hear the songbirds singing in the trees. He still felt blood and dirt in his nail.

Two weeks he spent by visiting his family lodge. The lodge where his family died. Where his mother lay, her dress on fire, and frozen in the snow. Where his father, face down near the steps, dead of his own decision. Where his Mischa killed and cannibalized by those *ruffians*.

He found her remains. He dug a grave for her, but it was not enough. He made a beautiful grave for her, on a pleasant east-facing slope above the lodge and lined it with all the wildflowers he could find, but it was never enough.

“Hannibal…”

A familiar voice was calling him quietly. He turned his head, seeing the boy he had long wanted to see looking at him. A smile spread slowly on his lips, not caring the tears that ran down his face.

“Hello, William.”

William frowned at his friend’s greeting. “You’re crying,” he said as he pressed his hand to the wall.

“I’m sorry if this bothers you,” Hannibal said, wiping his tears.

“And not only that, you killed someone. Again.”

‘Again?’ Hannibal wondered as he cocked his head. “Oh, how did you know that?”

William did not answer.

“Is that the secret you’ve once talked about?”

The boy instead gave a question. “Who’s the person you’ve killed this time, Hannibal?”

Hannibal smiled, though it betrayed by the coldness in his eyes. “It’s rude to answer a question with question, my dear William.”

The silence between them was maddening, and oppressing.

William sighed, heavy and resigned. “And you…” he paused, looked torn between something in his mind, before twisting his lips into a wry smile. “Draw with me, Hannibal.” He said softly. “Draw with me, and tell me your days.”

And Hannibal found himself to do so.

It began with the bruise on William’s arm.

Hannibal stared at the blackened skin of the boy with concealed fury. Who was the bastard that had dared to hurt *his* William? He clenched his hand, biting inside his mouth to keep the growl out. William did not look different than usual, chatty as always, but Hannibal could see him wincing occasionally when he moved. Hannibal was not sure if William only had bruises or he had other injuries. If only this wall was not here, he could check him up directly.

“William,” Hannibal knocking the wall softly, loud enough to get William’s attention. He pushed his anger back and put a worried face on. “I saw bruises on your arm.”

He saw an alarm look in the boy’s eyes before it quickly disappeared. “Oh, this?” William lifted his arm slightly. “I slipped and fell into the river when I went fishing with my dad. My

arm bruised because of the stones in the river."

'He's lying.' Hannibal thought, watching William smiled sheepishly at him. The bruises were more like handprints and rope burns than bruises from falling on the river rocks. That's why Hannibal angry. He would like to pry further when a yawn coming out of his mouth and his eyes were getting heavy. Damn. "You should be more careful, William," he said, giving a disapproved look, as he flopped down to prepare his waking up to the real world.

He was not going to ask more about it for now, but if it getting worse he had no choice but interrogate him.

Hannibal found another one of them, those ruffians, in a restaurant in Paris. His name was Petras Kolnas, came onto the terrace with his family, dressed for church.

Well, well, Kolnas the Prosperous, the Restaureteur, the Gourmand, came by to check the till on his way to church. How neat he was.

Hannibal saw the ruffian's daughter let go her father's pants leg and toddled between the tables, adorable in ruffles and a lacy bonnet and baby jewelry, beautiful like his Mischa and his William. He took the cherry from the top of the sundae he had been eating and held it at the edge of the table. The child came to get it, her hand extended, her thumb and forefinger ready to pluck.

So innocent and unguarded. His eyes were bright. *'And you will become my pigeon post,'* he thought, his tongue appeared briefly and he began to sing to the child.

Ein Mannlein steht im Walde ganz still und stumm

Es hat von lauter Purpur ein Mantlein um

Sagt, wer mag das Männlein sein,

Das da steht im Wald allein

Mit dem purpurroten Mäntelein.

While she ate the cherry, Hannibal slipped something into her pocket.

Das Männlein steht im Walde auf einem Bein

Und hat auf seinem Haupte schwarz Käpplein klein,

Suddenly Kolnas was beside the table. He picked his daughter up. "She doesn't know that song."

A mild smile tugged on Hannibal's lips. "You must know it, you don't sound French to me."

"Neither do you, Monsieur," Kolnas said. He then glanced at the Asian lady who sat across Hannibal. "I wouldn't guess that you and your wife are French. We're all French now." He continued, before walking away with his daughter.

Hannibal and Lady Murasaki watched Kolnas bundle his family into a Traction Avant. "Lovely children," she said. "A beautiful little girl."

"Yes," Hannibal said, eyes narrowed at the family. "She's wearing Mischa's bracelet."

Sagt, wer mag das Männlein sein,

Das da steht im Wald allein

Mit dem kleinen schwarzen Käppelein?

William turned toward his companion. "What song is that?" he asked. "It sounds funny."

"It's a German folk song." Hannibal streaked his marker to make bold lines on his draw. "I used to sing it to my sister because she loved it."

William hummed loudly. "Your sister?" he asked. "You have a sister?"

Hannibal was silent, cogitating if he should tell him or not. "Yes," he said finally. "Her name was Mischa."

"*'Was'*," William noted. "She has passed away."

Hannibal quietly stared at the boy. "You look strangely calm." His eyes narrowed. "You *knew*."

"Don't get your panties in a wad, Hannibal." William said lightly. "I knew about her from your last hysteria. But it's proper if I asked."

Hannibal clammed up. Just… what information did he say during *that* happened? He clicked his tongue, frowned and deciding to change the subject. "I don't wear panties." he said instead, and surprised by this. What was he just said?

William gave him a blank look. "Of course you don't, it's just an expression," he said amusedly. "I would freak out if you do. You're definitely not fit to wear panties."

Hannibal scowled at him, as the boy laughing hard. "Like you do either," he mumbled sarcastically.

“What was that?” William asked.

Hannibal put on his polite smile. “Nothing, William.”

Another had down.

Hannibal watched a man submerged up to his neck in formalin solution in the tank with other occupants crowded close around him and regarded the man with eye gone cloudy in embalming fluid. He thought this man was a burglar at first, but when he examined the man’s wallet he wanted to laugh at how everything went. He took a dog tag from his own pocket and placed it beside the man’s ID card on the rim of the tank.

“Zigmas Milko. Good evening.”

He saw the monkey – he decided the man was a monkey – coughed and wheezed. “We talked about it. I brought you money. A settlement. We want you to have the money. I brought it. Let me take you to it.”

Money? Hannibal cocked his eyebrow. Did this monkey think that he will be released in exchange for money? He scoffed. “That sounds like a superior plan,” he said, making his voice sounded like intrigued. “You killed so many, Milko. So many more than these. Do you feel them in the tank around you? There by your foot, that’s a child from a fire. Older than my sister, and partly cooked.”

“I don’t know what you want.” The monkey said, almost immediately.

Hannibal pulled on a rubber glove. “To hear what you have to say about eating my sister.”

“I did not.”

Hannibal pressed the monkey under the surface of the embalming fluid. After a long moment, he seized the chain tether and pulled him up again, poured water in his face, flushing his eyes.

“Don’t say that again,” he said.

“We all felt badly, so badly,” the monkey said as soon as he could talk. “Freezing hands and rotting feet. Whatever we did, we did it to live. Grutas was quick, she never… we kept you alive, we-”

“Where is Grutas?” Hannibal cut him, began feel unnerved by this monkey.

“If I tell you, will you let me take you to the money? It’s a lot, in dollars. There is a lot more money too, we could blackmail them with what I know, with your evidence.”

“Where is Grentz?”

“Canada.”

“Correct. The truth for once. Where is Grutas?”

“He has a house near Milly-le-Foret.”

“What is his name now?”

“He does business as Satrug, Inc.”

“Did he sell my pictures?”

“Once, to buy a lot of morphine, no more.” How dare that ruffian sold his pictures just for morphine. “We can get them back.”

Hannibal hummed lightly. “Have you tried the food at Kolnas’ restaurant? The sundaes aren’t bad.”

“I have the money in the truck.”

Pathetic. A cold smile tugged on Hannibal’s lips. “Last words? A valedictory?”

He saw the monkey opened his mouth to speak, but Hannibal quickly put the heavy cover down with a clang. Less than an inch of air remained between the cover and the surface of the embalming fluid. He left the room, he could hear the monkey bumping against the lid like a lobster in a pot. He closed the door behind him, rubber seals squealing against the paint.

There was a burn mark on William’s temple and a little slicing wound on his neck now.

Hannibal twitched as his eyes locked on the boy’s face. The wounds concealed by those brunette fringes, but they were too big that he could saw them. Official, there was someone who abused the boy.

“William-”

“Don’t say anything, *please*, Hannibal.” William cut him quickly. “You have your own burden, and I don’t want to add mine to you too.” Hannibal opened his mouth to rebut, but William interjected him. “You can’t do anything even though you know anyway. You’re in France and I’m in Louisiana.”

Hannibal fell silent.

“Don’t worry, Hannibal.” William smiled at him. “Just, finish your revenge and live in peace, okay?”

Hannibal was not surprised anymore by William’s quirk of knew a lot, but he still wondered about how he knew. Hannibal never told anything about his darkest past to him, especially about his revenge, but somehow this boy seemed to know anything about it.

He sighed at the stubborn look on William’s face. Damn it, he could be sure that William would not say anything even if he forced him. If only this glass wall did not exist… He was worried, and he did not want to lose him. He was not willing to lose his William as he lost his Mischa. “Promise me you won’t leave me anytime.”

William blinked and laughed nervously. “Erm… Hannibal, that’s too…”

“Just promise me.”

A silence emitted between the two, oppressive and all-consuming, until a soft voice breaking it. “I promise.”

Hannibal nodded and turned back to his drawing on the wall.

The flowers were blooming again in this strange dream.

They set off in a random direction, walking as they enjoying the spring in the dream. Watching the flowers dancing in the breeze. William was being exceptionally chatty now. Hannibal smiled as he talking back, though he was more and more worried for the boy. His maroon eyes were tracing the swollen on William’s cheek and enraged. If only this wall did not exist and the distance between them was not so far away…

“I want to touch you, William,” Hannibal said, pressed his fingers onto the wall. “If I punch this wall many times and continuously, is it going to break and let me go to your side?”

William glanced at Hannibal, and smiled tightly. “This wall is meant to stay unbroken or I have long broken it, Hannibal.”

Hannibal blinked his eyes, as William grinned at him before sitting down in a place that looked no different from where they had first appeared. “What do you mean by that?” Hannibal asked, sitting down too.

William shrugged. “I had tried it, and it ended badly.”

Hannibal tilted his head. “You’re still a kid, my dear William, so it’s normal for you to can not break it,” he said. “Maybe if I’m the one who…”

“Don’t try it, Hannibal, or you will regret it.”

He raised an eyebrow at what William said. The boy looked scared, this new as he never saw the boy scared anything. What would happen if this wall broken? It had piqued his curiosity, but he did not say anything. They sat across in the silence, eyes studied at each other.

“Say, Hannibal, would you miss me if one day we’ll never see each other again?”

Hannibal’s eyes widened, confused by the question. “What makes you ask that?” he trailed hesitantly.

William cocked his head slightly. “There’s a possibility that one day we will no longer appear in this dream, you know?” William pulled the cap off the marker with his teeth and made another picture on the wall. “And we don’t know when it will turn up. Could be ten years later, or could be in a month.”

Hannibal was silent.

“Well, I’m surely going to miss you a lot.” William continued, cheerily. “After all, you’re my first friend.”

The wind blew and swaying their hair, as a long silence bursting out like water pressure. Blue and maroon eyes met, many emotions conflicted in those eyes.

“No, I won’t. I won't miss you,” Hannibal said calmly, breaking the silence.

William paused of his drawing, feeling a lump in his throat. He did not know why he felt this upset, as he never expecting Hannibal to miss him if they no longer again meet in this strange dream.

“I won't miss you, because I will find you.”

William snapped his head toward his blonde companion. “Wha…”

A genuine soft smile tugged on Hannibal’s lips. “If that happens, I'll be looking for you. No matter how far you are and how long it takes, I will find you.” He said. “I like you too much to do otherwise, my dear William.”

A blush spread out on William’s face prettily, stammering of something that Hannibal did not quite hear. Hannibal cocked his head slightly, his smile turning into a sly one.

“Why is your face red, William?” Hannibal asked, teasingly. “Are you embarrassed?”

“Shu… shut up!”

But Hannibal did not stop. “My, my, what mouth you have. You’re really a shy one.”

“Just… stop that, idiot! Or I will punch you!”

“How could you punch me if you can’t get past this wall?” Hannibal knocked the glass wall.

Will pouted and clicked his tongue. “Damn…”

And Hannibal laughed, heartily and genuine and unexpected, the first time he did since he lost his family.

He finally found him. Hannibal glared from behind his hiding place at the man who currently reclined in his bathtub with a woman. He finally found Vladis Grutas. Covered by a couple of white towels, Hannibal was nearly invisible from the steam room through the frosted shower door. Under the towels he could hear his own breathing. It was like being rolled in the rug with Mischa. Instead of her warm hair near his face, he had the smell of the pistol, machine oil and brass cartridges and cordite.

Hannibal came through the glass doors in a cloud of steam, the gun up and pointed at Grutas' heart. In his other hand he had a bottle of reagent alcohol. Grutas' skin squeaked as he pushed himself up in the tub and the woman in front of him shied from him before she knew Hannibal was behind her.

"I'm glad you're here," Grutas said as he looked at the bottle in Hannibal's hand. "I've always felt I owed you something."

"I discussed that with Milko."

"And?"

"He arrived at a solution."

"The money of course! I sent it with him, and he gave it to you? Good!"

Hannibal spoke to the woman without looking down at her. "Wet your towel in the tub. Go over to the corner and sit down, and put the towel over your face. Go on. Wet it in the tub."

The woman doused the towel and backed into the corner with it. "Kill him," she said.

"I've waited so long to see your face," Hannibal said coldly. "I put your face on every bully I ever hurt. I thought you would be bigger."

Grutas was looking at the gun too. It was Milko's gun. It had a breech lock on the receiver for use with the silencer. If this little Lecter was not familiar with it, he would be limited to one shot. Then he'd have to fumble with the pistol. "Did you see the things I have in this house, Hannibal?" he said. "Opportunities from the war! You are accustomed to nice things, and you can have them. We are alike! We are the New Men, Hannibal. You, me–the cream–we will always float to the top!" He raised suds in his hand to illustrate floating, getting Hannibal used to his movement.

"Dog tags don't float." Hannibal tossed Grutas' dog tag into the tub and it settled like a leaf to the bottom. "Alcohol floats." Hannibal threw the bottle and it smashed on the tile above Grutas, showering stinging fluid down on his head, pieces of glass falling in his hair.

Hannibal took from his pocket a Zippo to light Grutas. As he flipped open the lighter, he felt a pistol cocked behind his ear. Two Grutas' henchmen grabbed Hannibal's arms from both sides. One of the henchmen pushed the muzzle of Hannibal's gun toward the ceiling and took it from his hand.

Grutas got out of the tub and stood on a towel. He gestured to the woman, now desperate to please. She sprayed him with seltzer over his shaved body as he turned in place, his arms extended. "Do you know how that feels, the fizzy water?" he said. "It feels like being born again. I'm all new, in a new world with no room in it for you. I can't believe you killed Milko by yourself."

"Someone lent me a hand," Hannibal said.

"Hold him over the tub and cut him when I tell you."

The three men wrestled Hannibal to the floor and held his head and neck over the bathtub. One of the henchmen had a switch knife. He put the edge to Hannibal's throat.

"Look at me, Count Lecter, my prince, twist your head and look at me, get your throat stretched tight and you'll bleed out fast. It won't hurt so long."

Through the steam room door, Hannibal could see the hand of the timer of the explosive he had set before moving tick by tick.

"Answer this," Grutas said. "Would you have fed me to the little girl if she were starving? Because you loved her?"

"Of course."

Grutas smiled and tweaked Hannibal's cheek. "There. There you have it. Love. I love myself that much. I would never apologize to you. You lost your sister in the war." Grutas belched and laughed. "That burp is my commentary. Are you looking for sympathy? You'll find it in the dictionary between shit and syphilis. Cut him, Mueller. This is the last thing you will ever hear, I'll tell you what YOU did to live. You-"

The explosion shuddered the bathroom and the sink jumped off the wall, water spurting from the pipes, and the lights went out. Hannibal caught someone hard in the face with his elbow and was on his feet, a muzzle flash as a gun went off in the tiled room and splinters stung his face. Smoke, heavy smoke, curled out of the wall.

Grutas picked up the gun, the woman jumping on him with her nails at his face and he shot her twice in the chest. Climbed to his feet, the gun coming up. Hannibal snapped the wet towel across Grutas' eyes. A henchman on Hannibal's back, Hannibal threw himself backward on top of him and felt the impact as the edge of the tub caught the henchman across the kidneys and made the scum let him go. Hannibal then butted another henchman in the face, slid his hand between them, finding a gun in the henchman's waistband, and pulled the trigger with the gun still in his pants, the big guy rolling off him with a howl, and Hannibal ran with the gun.

He had to slow in the dark bedroom, then fast into the corridor filling with smoke. He picked up a maid's pail in the corridor and carried it with him through the house, once hearing a gun go off behind him. The gate guard was out of the blockhouse and halfway to the front door.

He would blend in to escape.

"Get water!" Hannibal yelled to him. He handed the man the bucket as he rushed past. "I'll get the hose!"

He was running hard down the driveway, cutting into the trees as soon as he could. He heard shouts behind him, but he neither heeded them. He ran up the hill to the orchard where his motorcycle parked. Quick the ignition, feeling for the wire in the dark.

Compression release, his hand twisted a little gas. The BMW awakened with a growl and Hannibal exploded out of the brush, down the path between the trees, the muffler was knocking lose on a stump, and then on the road, roaring off into the dark, the hanging pipe scrapping against the pavement and leaving a trail of sparks.

"You're a reckless one, you know that?" William scowled at him. Hannibal raised his head from the flower bed, just woke up in the dream, and staring blankly at the boy. "What the fuck are you thinking, barged into enemy's lair by yourself?! You almost died because of your stupidity!"

Hannibal's eyes narrowed.

"Oh, no, don't give me that look, Hannibal," William glared at his *friend*. "I know that you yourself also think so."

The blonde's eyebrows twitched.

"Why are you attacking him alone?! You could call the inspector – who's his name? Popil? – to back you up, but no! You must do it alone!"

"William," Hannibal called. "Calm down. You're freak out."

"What?!" William snapped his head at the blonde. "I'm not freak out, and I'm calm!"

Hannibal cocked his now singed eyebrow, and stared at William in amused.

"Okay, maybe I'm freaking out a bit," William said more calmly. "But, what the fucking hell, Hannibal?!"

Hannibal did not answer. He just got up and sat leaning the wall.

"Does it ever occur to you that you're not alone?" William said.

Hannibal gave him a cold look. “Oh, and what makes you think you have a right to ask that, *William*?” he asked back, glaring at the wounds that marred the boy’s skin.

William clammed up. The silence pressed between them in heavy and oppressive pressure for a moment before the boy breaking it. “Okay, you got your point there,” he said finally. He sighed, sat cross-legged beside Hannibal. “You’re not hurt much, right?” he asked, popping out his marker.

Hannibal smiled. “I’m fine, William. I’m not hurting anywhere, just my eyebrows.”

“Aw, poor you,” William said sarcastically, drawing something on the wall. “Don’t worry, you still can become a comedian with those eyebrows.” He pointed at his drawing.

It was a doodle of a mime.

Hannibal twitched. “Oh, you think you’re funny?” he capped off his marker and began to draw. “I think with your curly hair you will look good in this.”

The picture of William wearing a petticoat gown displayed on the glass wall. Complete with heels, ribbons, and laces.

William stared agape at the picture.

Hannibal gave him a smug smirk.

William glared at him and began to draw, Hannibal was also followed him. They exchanged pictures on each other, taunting and teasing. And without realizing it, they forgot their troubles – though just for a moment – in laugh and fun.

He did not see William for very long weeks.

Hannibal knew that he should not worry because this kind of thing had happened twice before, but it still made him unnerved. He worried about William. The last time they met, Hannibal saw the wounds on the boy’s body increased and getting worse.

Maybe he should postpone his hunt against Vladis Grutas, and bought a ticket to America and search his William.

He knocked on Lady Murasaki’s apartment door, and startled when he heard the telephone ringing inside. It sounded oddly shrill to him. The door swung open when he pushed his key into the lock. He ran through the apartment, looking and looking, flinching when he pushed open her bedroom door, but the room was empty. The telephone was ringing and kept ringing.

He picked up the receiver. “Hello,” Hannibal said. His eyes widened when he heard a familiar voice through the phone.

It was Vladis Grutas.

“To continue our conversation, do you want to see the Jap alive?” Grutas asked.

Hannibal gripped the receiver tightly. “Yes.”

“Listen to her and guess if she still has her cheeks.”

What was that sound behind Grutas’ voice? Boiling water? Hannibal did not know if the sound was real as he heard boiling water in his nightmares.

“Speak to your little fuckboy.” Grutas said.

There was Lady Murasaki’s voice. “My dear, DON’T-”

Hannibal had to bite inside of his lip to hold back a growl out of his throat. A banged sound was heard before the sound of the birds screeched and twittered followed.

Grutas spoke to Hannibal. “*My dear*, you have killed two men for your sister and you have blown up my house. I offer you a life for a life. Bring everything, the dog tags, Pot Watcher’s little inventory, every fucking thing. I feel like making her squeal.”

“Where…”

“Shut up. Kilometer thirty-six on the road to Trilbardou, there is a telephone kiosk. Be there at sunrise and you’ll get a call. If you are not there you get her cheeks in the mail. If I see Popil, or any policeman, you get her heart parcel post. Maybe you can use it in your studies, poke through the chambers, see if you can find your face. A life for a life?”

Hannibal could taste his blood on his tongue now. “A life for a life,” he said, and the line went dead.

He put the receiver back to the telephone, glaring at it for a long moment, before he went into the bedroom. He sat on the bed with his eyes closed. He sighed, fingers pressing on his temple. *‘I’m sorry, William,’* he thought, feeling fury inside. *‘It seems I still can’t look for you yet.’*

And he began his preparation for get Lady Murasaki back from those ruffians.

If he wanted to find her, he should look for an ally from insiders.

And who was better than Petras Kolnas, a *family* man with little children, to serve as an ally for him?

The taillight of his bicycle was still visible when Hannibal slipped into the kitchen door. He carried a bulky object in a bloodstained bag. He saw Kolnas came into the kitchen while carrying his ledger. The man opened the firebox of the wood-burning oven, put in some receipts and poked them back into the fire.

“Herr Kolnas, surrounded by bowls,” Hannibal said in amused as he leaning against the wall with a glass wine in one hand and a pistol in the other.

Kolnas spun around in surprised.

“Kolnas in bowl heaven. Surrounded by bowls. Are you wearing your dog tag, Herr Kolnas?” Hannibal continued, taking a sip of his wine.

“I am Kleber, citizen of France, and I am calling the police.”

“Let me call them for you.” Hannibal put down his glass and picked up the telephone. “Do you mind if I call the War Crimes Commission at the same time? I’ll pay for the call.”

“Fuck you. Call who you please. You can call them, I’m serious. Or I’ll do it. I have papers, I have friends.”

Hannibal hummed, not interested by the man’s babbling. “I have the children. Yours.”

Kolnas’ eyes widened. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“I have both of them. I went to your home on the Rue Juliana. I went into the room with the big stuffed elephant and I took them.”

“You are lying.”

A more feral smile tugged on Hannibal’s lips. “*‘Take her, she’s going to die anyway,’* isn’t that what you said on that cold winter. Remember?” he said. “Tagging along behind Grutas with your bowl.”

Kolnas flinched.

Hannibal chuckled. “Now, now, I brought something for your oven.” He reached behind him and threw onto the table his bloody bag. “We can cook together, like old times.” He dropped Mischa’s bracelet onto the kitchen table. It rolled around and around before it settled to a stop.

Kolnas made a gagging sound. For a moment he could not touch the bag with his trembling hands and then he tore at it, tore at the bloody butcher paper inside, tore down to meat and bones.

“It’s a beef roast, Herr Kolnas, and a melon. I got them at Les Halles. But do you see how it feels?”

Kolnas lunged across the table, bloody hands finding Hannibal's face, but he was off his feet stretched over the table and Hannibal pulled him down, and he brought the pistol down on the base of Kolnas' skull, not too hard, and Kolnas' lights went out.

Hannibal's face, smeared with blood, looked like the demonic faces in his own dreams. He poured water in Kolnas' face until his eyes opened.

"Where is Katerina, what have you done with her?" Kolnas said.

"She is safe, Herr Kolnas. She is pink and perfect. You can see the pulse in her temple. I will give her back to you when you give me Lady Murasaki."

"If I do that I am a dead man."

"No. Grutas will be arrested and I will not remember your face. You get a pass for the sake of your children."

"How do I know they are alive?"

"I swear on my sister's soul you will hear their voices. Safe. Help me or I will kill you and leave the child to starve. Where is Grutas? Where is Lady Murasaki?"

Kolnas swallowed, choked on some blood in his mouth. "Grutas has a houseboat, a canal boat, he moves around. He's in the Canal de Loing south of Nemours."

"The name of the boat?"

"Christabel. You gave your word, where are my children?"

Hannibal let Kolnas up. He picked up the telephone beside the cash register, dialed a number and handed Kolnas the receiver.

As Kolnas listened to the puzzled sleepy voice of the awakened child, his face changed. First relief and then curious blankness as his hand crept toward the gun on the shelf beneath the cash register. His shoulders slumped. "You tricked me, Herr Lecter."

"I kept my word. I will spare your life for the sake of your–"

Kolnas spun with the big Webley in his fist, Hannibal's hand slashing toward it. The gun was going off beside them, and he drove the tanto dagger he had brought to the underneath of Kolnas' chin and the point came out the top of his head.

The room was silent. The telephone receiver swung from its wire. Kolnas fell forward on his face. Hannibal rolled him over and sat for a moment in a kitchen chair looking at him. Kolnas' eyes were open, already glazing. Hannibal put a bowl over the man's face, pondering.

He had killed more than three people, and he would kill even more. Once everything was over, could he stop killing?

Vladis Grutas' houseboat was wonderfully quiet as it motored southward sending a soft ripple against the sides of the canal, cows asleep in the fields on both sides. He turned off his bicycle's lights, turned around and walking toward near the bridge, putting his motorcycle in between the bushes beside the road.

A few rowboats were upside down on the canal bank. Hannibal sat on the ground among them and peered over the hulls at the boat coming on, still a half-kilometer away. He smiled wistfully at the night sky above. If he remembered clearly, William loved the sight of the night sky, where the stars and moon shone together in the darkness. Maybe after this, he would draw the night on his canvas. Then, he would paint the sky with stars, and present the painting to his William when he found him.

And speaking of William, Hannibal could imagine his reaction if he knew what Hannibal was going to do. After all, he was now *–what William did say back then?–* **barging into the enemy's lair by himself**.

Dark beside the lock, and the sky clear and frosted with stars. The mast light of the canal boat should just be among the low stars when the boat reached the lock. It had not quite reached the low stars when the mast folded back, the light like a falling star descending in an arc. Hannibal saw the filament glow in the boat's big searchlight and flung himself down as the light gathered its beam and swept over him to the gates of the lock and the horn of the canal boat sounded. A light came on in the lockkeeper's cabin and in less than a minute the man was outside pulling on his suspenders. Hannibal screwed the silencer onto Milko's gun.

Vladis Grutas came up the front companionway and stood on the deck. He stretched and threw a cigarette into the water. He said something to his right-hand and put the shotgun on the deck among the planters, out of sight of the lock-keeper, and went below again.

A henchman at the stern put out fenders and readied his line. The upstream lock doors stood open. The lockkeeper went into his booth beside the canal and turned on bollard lights at each end of the lock. The canal boat slid under the bridge into the lock, the captain reversing his engine to stop. At the sound of the motor, Hannibal sprinted onto the bridge in a low crouch, keeping below the stone railing.

He looked down into the boat as it slid beneath him, down on the deck and through the skylights. Skylight sliding under, a glimpse of Lady Murasaki bound to a chair, visible only for an instant from directly above.

Hannibal leaned over the railing. At a range of two feet he shot the henchman in the top of the head, up on the railing now and jumping, landing on the henchman and rolling to the deck. He tried the stern companionway door.

He clicked his tongue in distaste. Locked.

Hannibal crouched beside the body on the stern, patted the waist. This henchman was not armed. He would have to pass the wheelhouse to go forward. He startled when a voice called.

“Gassman?” It was the captain’s, calling this henchman. Hannibal went forward on the right side. He saw the captain came out of the wheelhouse on the left, and scuttling forward fast, bent over beside the low deck cabins.

He instantly knew that the captain had found the henchman’s body when he heard a gun go off behind him. The bullet ricocheted off a stanchion, and the fragments stinging his shoulder.

Well, well, let’s the game began.

Hannibal ran down the stairs fast and along the narrow passage of the lower deck. He looked into the first cabin. Empty. Nothing but cots and chains. He slammed open the second door, and his eyes widened as he saw Lady Murasaki tied to the chair.

He rushed to her when a bullet striking between his shoulder blades from behind. He grunted, went down on his back, blood spreading from under him. He saw Grutas smiled and came to him, putting his pistol under Hannibal’s chin and patted him down.

“Shot in the spine, my little Mannlein,” Grutas said, as he took a stiletto from his belt and poked the tip into Hannibal’s legs. “Can't feel your legs? Too bad. You won't feel it when I cut off your balls.” Grutas smiled at Lady Murasaki. “I'll make you a coin purse to keep your tips.”

Hannibal glared hard at him.

“You can see?” Grutas wagged the long blade before Hannibal's face. “Excellent! Look at this.” Grutas stood before Lady Murasaki and trailed the point lightly down her cheek, barely dimpling the skin. “I can put some color in her cheeks.” He drove the stiletto into the back of the chair beside her head. “I can make some new places for sex.”

Hannibal’s fingers twitched, his hand moved slightly toward his head. A growl was vibrating in his chest. Lady Murasaki said nothing, keeping her eyes fixed on Hannibal. His eyes moved from Lady Murasaki to Grutas and back again. He could hear what she had to say.

Attack him while I’m distracting him.

Lady Murasaki looked up at Grutas, excitement in her face along with anguish. She could be as beautiful as she chose to be. Grutas bent and kissed her hard, cutting her lips against her teeth, his face crushed over hers, his hard empty face paling, his pale eyes unblinking as he groped inside her blouse. Did not notice that Hannibal got his hand behind his head, pulled from behind his collar the tanto knife, bloody, bent and dimpled by Grutas' bullet.

Grutas blinked, his face convulsed in agony, his ankles buckled and he fell hamstrung, Hannibal twisting from under him. Lady Murasaki, with her ankles bound together, kicked Grutas in the head. Grutas tried to raise his gun, but Hannibal seized the barrel, twisting up, the gun went off and Hannibal slashed Grutas' wrist, the gun falling away and sliding on the floor. Grutas crawled toward the gun, pulling himself on his elbows, then up on his knees, knee-walking, and falling again,pulling himself on his elbows like a broken-backed animal in the road. Hannibal cut Lady Murasaki's arms free and she jerked the stiletto out of the back of the chair to cut free her ankles and moved into the corner beside the door. Hannibal,his back bloody, cut Grutas off from the gun.

Grutas stopped and on his knees he faced Hannibal. An eerie calm came over him. He looked up at Hannibal with his pale Arctic eyes. “Together we sail death ward,” Grutas said. “Me, you, the stepmother that you fuck, the men you have killed.”

“They were not men.”

“What did Dortlich taste like, a fish? Did you eat Milko too?”

“Don’t hear him, Hannibal,” Lady Murasaki spoke from the corner. “Hannibal, if Popil takes Grutas he may not take you. Hannibal, be with me. Give him to Popil.”

“He ate my sister.” Hannibal growled.

“So did you,” Grutas said, smirking as he saw Hannibal’s eyes widened. “Why don't you kill yourself?”

What did he just say?

Hannibal’s breath was caught. “No. That's a lie.”

Grutas laughed aloud. “Oh, you did. The good-old Pot Watcher fed her to you in the broth. You have to kill everyone who knows it, don't you? Now that your woman knows it, you really should kill her too.”

Hannibal’s body trembled, hands were over his ears.

‘Mischa! I ate her! NoNoNoNo! I ate her too! No! MischaMischaMischaMischaMischa!!!’

“No, Hannibal! Don’t listen to him! He’s lying!” Lady Murasaki said, trying to disenchant him.

Grutas scuttled toward the gun, talking and kept talking. “You ate her, half-conscious, your lips were greedy around the spoon.”

“NOOOOOOOO!!!” Hannibal screamed at the ceiling. He ran toward Grutas, raising the knife in his hand.

“Hannibal, no!!” Lady Murasaki shouted.

But Hannibal did not hear her, he stomped the gun in Grutas' hand and slashed an 'M' on his face. "'M' for Mischa!" he screamed. Grutas fell backward on the floor as Hannibal brutally carved his body. "M' for Mischa! M' for Mischa! M' for Mischa! M' for-"

"Goddamn it, Hannibal!! Snap out and stop that!"

Hannibal stopped, his hands was frozen in the middle of swinging his knife. *'Wil… liam…?'* His eyes were wide in madness, looking around for the source of the voice. But there was nothing. *'How can he be-'*

A cry from behind him, jolting him back to the reality. Faintly in the red mist a gunshot was heard. Hannibal felt the muzzle blast above him. He did not know if he was hit. He turned. The captain stood behind him, his back to Lady Murasaki, the handle of the stiletto standing behind his clavicle, the blade through his aorta; the gun slipped from the captain's fingers and he pitched forward on his face.

His aunt had saved him.

Hannibal was weaving on his feet, his face in a mask of red. "Are you hit?" he said.

Lady Murasaki closed her eyes, shaking. "No."

He saw the fear in her eyes, fear of *him*, and he dreaded by a bad feeling. "I love you, Lady Murasaki," he said as he went to her.

Lady Murasaki opened her eyes and held his bloody hands away. "What is left in you to love?" she said and ran from the cabin, up the companionway and over the rail in a clean dive into the canal. The boat bumped gently along the edge of the canal.

Hannibal stared hollowly at nothing. It hurt, what Lady Murasaki had said to him. He chuckled dryly. Looks like he would lost the last of his remaining family member. He took a deep breath, trying to rid the stabbing feeling in his heart. A tear rolled slowly on his face. He stood there for a long moment in the silence, before he turned around and back to cleaning up his *work*.

He was now alone with the dead, their regard fast glazing. The henchmen's bodies were below decks, at the foot of the companionways. Grutas, smeared with red, lies in the cabin where he died. Each of them held a Panzerfaust in their arms like a big-headed doll. From the arms rack, Hannibal took the final Panzerfaust and lashed it down in the engine room, its fat anti-tank missile two feet from the fuel tank. From the boat's ground tackle, he took a grapnel and tied the line around the top mounted trigger of the Panzerfaust. He stood on deck with the grapnel hook in his hand as the boat inched along, bumping gently against the stone border of the canal. From the deck he could see flashlights on the bridge. He heard yelling and a dog was barking.

He dropped the hook into the water. The line snaked slowly over the side as Hannibal stepped onto the bank and set off across the fields. He did not look back. At four hundred meters the explosion came. He felt the shock wave on his back and the pressure rolled over him with the noise. A piece of metal landed in the field behind him. The boat blazed fiercely in the canal

and a column of sparks rose into the sky, whipped into spirals by the fire's draft. More explosions blew the burning timbers wheeling into the sky as the charges in the other Panzerfausts went off.

From a mile distant he saw the flashing lights of police cars at the lock. He did not go back. He walked across the fields and they found him at daylight.

These months were very chaotic.

Hannibal arrested by the police for murder of many people, but soon he was released as there were complications in his case – to the dismay of Inspector Popil. First, the new case was an act of revenge of the remaining from the war, a conviction for the murder of fascists and war criminals would have to be airtight and, even justified, it would be politically unpopular. Second, the murder of the butcher Paul Momund was years ago, and the evidence just consisted of the smell of oil of cloves. Third, the exact circumstances surrounding the death of the restaurateur Kolnas, or Cryto-Fascist Restaurateur and Black-Marketeer Kolnas, as he was known in the papers, could not be determined. Yes, there was a hole of unknown origin in the top of his skull and his tongue and hard palate were pierced by persons unknown. He had fired a revolver, as a paraffin test proved. And fourth, the dead men in the canal boat were reduced to grease and soot. They were known to be kidnappers and white slavers.

While the court proceedings took place, there were a lot of things happened to Hannibal. Lady Murasaki rejected him. To forget the hollowness in his heart, Hannibal volunteered to work in the jail dispensary and petitioned the court to allow him to return to medical school. Dr. Claire DeVrie, the head of the fledgling Police Forensics Laboratory, a bright and attractive woman, found Hannibal extremely useful in setting up a compact qualitative analysis and toxin identification unit with the minimum of reagents and equipment. She wrote a letter on his behalf.

Dr. Dumas, his teacher, whose relentless cheer irritated Popil beyond measure, submitted a ringing endorsement of Hannibal, and explained that Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore, America, was offering him an internship, after reviewing his illustrations for the new anatomy text. Hannibal, of course took advantage of this opportunity. He could go to America legally. He could search his William. Well, maybe the destination of this *opportunity* was not Louisiana, but he could visit the place in his spare time.

The morning a day after his release, he discovered that Lady Murasaki’s telephone had been disconnected. He went to her apartment and let himself in with his key. The apartment was empty except for the telephone stand. Beside the telephone was a letter for him. It was attached to the blackened twig from Hiroshima sent to Lady Murasaki by her father. He opened the letter and read the content.

Goodbye, Hannibal. I have gone home.

He let out a bitter smile. His aunt, his only family, had completely left him. He sighed, and walking out of the apartment. He tossed the burnt twig into the Seine on his way to a restaurant. Surprisingly, her leaving was not so painful for him. But he knew it was because he was not alone.

He was not lonely.

After all he still had his William. His sweet and beautiful William, who accepted him though he seemed know that Hannibal had killed many, and had promised that he would never leave him.

Hannibal was pleased when he woke in the familiar strange dream. It had been months since he saw his favorite boy, and he missed him so much.

But, there was something weird here. The sky was not blue this time, Hannibal noted as he sat up. It was dark with masses of black clouds, and seemed like the sky would fall on him anytime. The sky always blue, clear blue, whether it's snowy or flowery, so it's surprised him to see the sky here cloudy. *'It's the first time*,*'* he thought as he still looking up at the sky.

He stood eventually, after wondering for a long moment. He blinked his eyes, smoothed down his shirt, and waiting for a familiar voice greeted him like usual.

But, after waiting for a least few minutes, no one called him.

Hannibal frowned. Another peculiarity, usually William would greet him by now – whether in normal way or by swearing and cursing – with his cheerfulness.

Yet, there was nothing.

He walked over the wall glass, saw it frosted a bit. This wall never frosted before, even when the land snowed and frozen, so why it did now? He rubbed the glass with his sleeve to look behind the wall, and what he saw made him gasped aloud.

It's wreck. Everything around in the other side of the wall was ***wreck***. The trees were broken. Something black like goo stained the ground and the trunks everywhere. Hannibal's eyes roamed around. No William in sight. Where was he?

"William?" he called.

Only silence answered him.

"William?!" he called again, more loudly this time.

Silence. Nothing but silence all around him.

“William, are you there?!”

Still, just silence.

Dread engulfed him.

He walked along the wall, keeping his sleeve on it to rub the frost on the glass. His eyes were searching rapidly, hoping to see the boy. But though he had long been searching, he still did not see a glimpse of him.

A snort was heard. He turned his head slightly, seeing a black feathered stag stood tall a few steps further away from him, on the other side of the glass wall. It watched him with dark eyes. There’s something intent in its eyes, like a summons, and when it turned around and tilted its head it drive the point home.

Well, it’s not like he had anything else to do. Maybe he would find William on the way.

The stag clopped forward and Hannibal followed it. Hannibal noticed that the clouds were darker as the step he took. He would not be surprised if suddenly it rained here. He kept his eyes on the stag, wondering about its behavior.

And then, the stag disappeared.

Hannibal blinked his eyes. He looked around, searching the great stag. But, instead a stag, he found someone lying down on the snow.

It was William.

“William?” he called.

There was no response. William did not even twitch.

Worried, Hannibal inched closer to the wall, pressed his palms on it. His eyes widened as he examined on William’s condition. There were many wounds and bruises marred the boy’s body. Too many and severe. He saw William’s eyes glazed. A familiar glaze that he always saw in his murder victims’ eyes.

William was dying.

His William was going to die.

But, if he was dying in *here*, in this dream, did that mean he was too in the real world?

“William!!” Hannibal shouted, pounding the wall hard. “Hey, William! Hang in there!”

William’s eyes slipped shut and Hannibal could only watch in horror as the blood that pooled under his little body kept growing larger.

Snow. Blood. Body.

It's like Mischa once again.

No, he could not let that happen.

"William?! Hey, William!" Hannibal shouted, banging the wall. "William! William, keep your eyes open, please!"

He pounded on the glass and yelled, but William did not move. He could not even see the boy's chest moving anymore. He looked around him to search anything that could he use to break the glass, but nothing. No rock, no stone, no broken trunk or wood lying around. In desperation, he began punching the glass as hard as he could, hoping that the glass would crack under the force.

Blood began to stain his knuckles. His heart leapt when he saw the first crack appear. He could do it! He could break through and get to William. The crack grew larger, then another and then another appeared. They spiraled out and spread until it finally shattered and gave way under his assault. He pulled his fist back, heedless of the cuts all over it, punching again and intending to smash out the rest of the glass.

But something unexpected happened.

He saw the glass start moving while his arm was still a good portion of the way through. *This wall is meant to stay unbroken or I have long broken it,* that what had William said. He now understood just what William had meant by that. He pulled his arm out as fast as he could, but it was too late. His scream rent the air as the wall sealed itself with his hand and part of his arm still on the other side.

He gritted his teeth as he tugged and tugged his arm to release it, not caring the jagged glass sliced through his arm. The wall broke once again, right in time before it cutting off his arm, and long enough for him to pull his arm before the glass mended itself back. Searing pain was flowing through his very being. His arm was shredded, blood streaming down to the ground. He stumbled back, quickly taking off his coat and pressed it against the wounds.

He smiled slightly, in relief and worry, when he saw William's eyes flutter open as the wall back into its former glory. He felt dizzy, his body swaying dangerously to the side. But even so, he was still banging the renewed glass wall, though it's weak. He barely registered his surrounding as he is too overwhelmed by the sharp, crippling pain that flooded his senses when he watched William moving a trembling hand and wrote in shaky letters with his blood on the wall.

Come find me

William's smile was so sad it made Hannibal's heart break. He saw the glass wall blackened, blocking his view of the boy. There was a tug, and a tug, and a tug. It's ringing. It's rough. It's thunderous. His eyes widened when he felt his body being pulled, dragged away as if he was caught by something invisible, picking up speed as he watched everything around him fades into blurring scene.

'I'll find you, William! I swear!'

That was the last thought in his mind, before falling into the sea of darkness.

And he never saw William again in his dream since then.

End Notes

A fact :
• Hannibal lost his uncle when he was thirteen. I made him fifteen because of the following incident after that (though it's not included in this fic) and because I want Hannibal just ten years older than Will. (I don't know Will's age actually is)
• The song Hannibal sang (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5bVQcpSrUE)

For ones who did not understand names in this fic :

• Herr is a German for Mister.
• Monsieur is a French for Mister.
• Panzerfaust (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panzerfaust)
• Webley (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webley_Revolver)
• Zippo (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zippo)
• Tanto is a short blade, one of the traditionally made Japanese swords (nihonto) that were worn by the samurai class of feudal Japan.

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